1.0 Application and Assessment Processes:

1.1 I have been using Access to Work on and off since 1990.

1.2 In my experience, employers have very little understanding of AtW, especially HR departments and therefore it is best for assessments and applications to be carried out by AtW assessors where this is requested by the applicant.

1.3 When support and resources are allocated – people’s job performance improves considerably and they are able to make a very effective contribution to their work place or own businesses.

1.4 I find the process of applying for AtW difficult. Because it is in English and I have to be careful how everything is worded. Maybe the way I say something will deny me getting AtW I should not have to rely on other people this way – I should be able to make application in other formats. Using an external assessor would be useful.

1.5 I feel it is insulting to ask me how much I am earning because I do not think that is relevant to my ability to work. It is about ACCESS to work not a judgment of my status within society.

1.6 It is not fair that we are not given the chance to appeal against decisions to try and explain our situation in a way that DWP can understand. I feel that this is a big discrimination against disabled people.

2.0 AtW’s effectiveness in terms of helping disabled people to: Secure a job

2.1 Without AtW I would not be able to do my jobs that I have had over the years
2.2 people can pick up the phone and have problems at work solved in a matter of minutes, I cannot rely on emails for sorting out things we cannot be left waiting for hours/days to resolve problems by then it is often too late or we have lost business or performance.

2.3

3.0 AtW’s effectiveness in terms of helping disabled people to: Stay in employment:

3.1 AtW imposing the 30-hour rules on people does not really understand what they need to stay in work.

3.2 They reduce my hours of support because they said I do not need to network for my business! They really do not understand that businesses must network all the time to get work and contracts. Businesses that do not network do not succeed.

3.3.

4.0 AtW’s effectiveness in terms of helping disabled people to: develop their careers

4.1 AtW does not understand that self-employed people need more training than employed people; we have to keep up with latest industry developments etc.

4.2 They also have to understand that when self-employed people are training they may not be earning, but they are working on their businesses they are building up their skills and knowledge in order that they can get more work or be more effective. I have had my allocation cut.

4.3 At this moment in time my AtW has been cut completely. I have been told that moving from self-employment to a Ltd company is one reason. But you have to understand that my job is still exactly the same, I am still the only person in my business and the nature of my job and the tasks involved have not changed. But still AtW have stopped my support.
4.3.1 they have also stopped it because they incorrectly calculated that I am earning below minimum wage. I have got my accountants to contact AtW and point out their mistakes. They have not replied, it is almost two weeks since we informed them. It is disgraceful the way I have been treated for trying to improve things.

4.3.2 I am still waiting for a reply from AtW.

5.0 The steps taken so far by DWP to extend AtW, including its marketing and funding of the scheme.

5.1 AtW is still usually discovered by word of mouth. Often coming far too late for people and perhaps after their employable potential. This must not be allowed to continue and AtW should be given more prominence.

5.2 They have done noting to market AtW they like to keep it quiet to save money.

5.3 In my networking, I am always coming across disabled self-employed people who have never heard of AtW and would not know where to start. These people have usually left full time employment because they have become disabled or too ill to carry out their former work so they have gone self-employed into work that was more manageable. They are always angry when I explain to them about AtW and they say that if they knew about it they would have been able to use it to keep their old jobs and be on better pay etc.

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